



GARY HARRIS

PRESIDENT-MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

CITY HALL

NEWARK, N. J. 07102

(201) 733-6708

FAX 733-4656

BIOGRAPHY

Gary S. Harris has been a member of the Newark Municipal Council since December, 1988, when he was appointed by the Council to succeed his father, the late Earl Harris, as Councilman-at-Large. He was elected in his own right the following November by special election, and was re-elected by a wide margin in 1990, for his first full term. In 1993, Councilman Harris assumed a one-year term as President of the Municipal Council, as a result of a vote by his Council peers to rotate the Council Presidency between four at-large members.

Councilman Harris brings to his role considerable experience, having served as the Chief of Staff to his father for several years. No stranger to government, he has extensive experience in public service. During the early 70's he spent summers serving underprivileged youths and senior citizens in the City of Newark. During this period he worked as a Project Supervisor, Program Analyst and Ward Coordinator. After college, Harris served as a Principal Planner in the Mayor's Policy and Development Office, and in that capacity was responsible for organizing block clubs and tenant councils throughout the City. The block club movement was considered a key component of the citizen participation activity requirement which was mandated by the federal government, and gave many residents an idea of how to organize themselves in this fashion.

Councilman Harris also assisted with the development of several food cooperatives in the City's Public Housing complexes. He supervised Newark's first garden program, which has since become a nationally recognized community based program.

In addition to his government experience, Councilman Harris also has several years experience in the private sector. He worked as an advertising executive for "Jet" Magazine and a sales representative for Anheuser Busch, which further enhanced his understanding of the role business plays in the economic health of a community.

The Councilman is a native Newarker and a product of the Newark School system. He currently resides in Newark's West Ward. He is an alumnus of Virginia Union University, and was named to "Who's Who" on America's Universities in 1975, and in 1979 was honored by the U.S. Jaycees as one of the "Outstanding Young Men of America". He is currently studying for his Masters degree in Public Administration at Rutgers University in Newark.

Councilman Harris is active in many civic and community organizations. He is a member of the Virginia Union Alumni Association, the United Negro College Fund, the Newark branch of the NAACP and the Urban League. He is also actively involved with the Newark YMCA, a former member of the Leaguers of Newark, the South Ward Boys Club, the Central Ward Young Democrats and is a former of the Board of the Boy Scouts of America.

Harris maintains that this wealth of experience and exposure have enhanced his ability to lead the City in his Council role. He is empowered by a strong sense of culture and historical knowledge. As a public servant, he has dedicated himself to doing what is best for the people of the City of Newark. The Councilman resides at 18 Synott Terrace, in the Vailsburg section of the West Ward.



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PLATFORM STATEMENT

(201) 703-8700

FAX 703-4886

A firm believer that "ONE GOOD TERM DESERVES ANOTHER", I am running on a foundation of action, involvement, commitment and concern. As a life-long resident of Newark who knows our City and has heard the hue and cry of the residents, I place at the top of my priority list issues regarding **YOUTH, POLICE PROTECTION, TAXATION, JOBS and SERVICES**. In working with residents, I have gotten back positive feedback on the many initiatives introduced, and have been encouraged to continue to go forward with the same progressive approach to governing.

Even with this encouragement, I am still aware that more remains to be done, and I stand ready, willing and able to continue to serve in the best interest of the residents of our City.

My **YOUTH INITIATIVES** have been instrumental in helping to reshape the thinking and actions of our young residents. I have been successful in developing an Afterschool Homework Assistance Program for students, unifying the Little Leagues City-wide - founding the first Newark Little League World Series, forming a Youth House Library, and promoting funding of additional afterschool recreation programs, among many other actions. In order to remove negative influences from our youth, I have championed the ban of obscene T-Shirt sales by our City's vendors.

POLICE PROTECTION and anti-crime efforts have always been at the forefront of my agenda and I have voted and constantly pushed to add police recruits and officers to our force. I have also fought for stronger enforcement of crime and drug laws, because the quality of life in our neighborhoods relies on this being in place.

TAXATION and water and sewer rates are key issues, and my involvement with the Tax Abatement committee has brought forth progressive activities to help to formulate ratables for the City. With my Colleagues, I have worked to eliminate misunderstandings and confusion regarding the water and sewer rates and billings, and maintain a posture advocating fair rates and current meters.

A staunch advocate of **JOB AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES** for residents, I have been affirmative on attempting to ensure hiring of Newarkers, as well as equal access and opportunity for African-Americans, Latinos and women, both in employment and in vendor/ purchasing/service contracts.

I have put in place a number of **SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS**, to the benefit of residents, City-wide. Examples are the Resident ID Office, which helps youths and others to facilitate their ability to cash checks or verify residency when needed. An in-house Cable Television Monitoring Office expedites resident problems and helps to answer questions, and initiatives to require towing accountability, fair rates and conditions have been developed.

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In addition, I have promoted joint actions to tackle other serious ongoing priorities such as decent, affordable housing, health and the availability of healthcare to all, assistance for the homeless, bus service, cleanliness of our neighborhoods as a means of instilling individual/community pride, and issues relating to the comfort and security of senior citizens.

One thing I have learned is that we all have to work as a team in order to accomplish our goals for the City. As President of the Council, I have come to appreciate the power of bringing all perspectives to the table and giving them due consideration. Most important is the ability to be fair yet strong and decisive on issues that are controversial in nature.